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IMPORTANT MOVEMENTS IN ISRAEL PRIOR TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM.

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The deliverance at the Red Sea.—Establishment of the theocracy.—Sojourn at Kadesh.—Conquest of the East Jordan land.—Conquest of Canaan.—Contact with the Canaanites.—The Conquest of the Kishon Valley.—Attempt to make Gideon king.—Conspiracy of Abimelech.—The Philistine oppression.—The revival under Samuel and the rise of the prophets.—The kingdom of Saul—His break with the prophets.—The choice of David.—The capital established at Jerusalem.

THIS article aims to give a brief synopsis of the events in the early history of Israel with special reference to the social, industrial, and religious development of the people.

1. *The deliverance at the Red Sea.*—No fact was more deeply rooted in the consciousness of Israel than the deliverance from Egypt. Questions as to the date, the Pharaoh of the oppression and the exodus, the route of the Israelites from Egypt and other details have given rise to endless speculation; but it has been largely speculation without exact data. The researches of the Egypt Exploration Fund have not settled these questions, though they have confined discussion within certain chronological limits and thrown some light on the nature of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan. The general agreement among scholars that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression has been confirmed by the discovery in 1885 of the site of the ancient Pithom at Tel el-Maskhutih. Not long ago it was almost unanimously agreed that Ramses' successor, Mer-en-Ptah, was the Pharaoh from whom Israel escaped. Latterly, however, the exodus has been pushed down to a later time and assigned to the reign of Si-Ptah or even to Ramses III in order to allow time for the overthrow of the Hitite power in Canaan and make room for the Israelitish invaders. Now comes the report that a newly dis-

covered inscription of Mer-en-Ptah relates that that king among other conquests in Syria and Palestine "left the people of Israel without seed." This mention of Israel is probably to be classed with the Jacob-el and Joseph-el in the list of places in Palestine conquered by Thothmes III. They show the scattered condition of the tribes. Some Israelites may never have migrated to Egypt and the conquest of Canaan as we shall see was gradual and accomplished by the tribes acting independently. We may expect to find Israelite communities in Palestine any time during the XVIIth, XVIIIth, and XIXth Egyptian dynasties.

But the importance of the Exodus to Israel is not to be measured by the attention it attracted from Egyptian annalists. Not even Moses' share was the central feature in the event as remembered by the people. Moses was the leader but not the actor in the deliverance. It was Jahweh himself who saved his people and overthrew their enemies. A strong wind drove back the sea and let the struggling band of fugitives pass, and veering around covered their pursuers with the waves. It was Jahweh fighting for his people. By that deliverance he made them a nation and sealed them for himself. It was the real birth-night of the nation. Never afterwards could Israel deny the fundamental principle of their religion. Jahweh was their God and they were Jahweh's people. Their praise was not given to Moses, but to Jahweh:

"Sing unto Jahweh, for he hath triumphed gloriously ;
The horse and his rider hath he cast into the sea."

2. *Establishment of the theocracy.*—There was a marked difference between Israel and the tribes with whom they came in contact after entering Canaan. Palestine was the camping ground for every roving band that came along. Thus its population became most heterogeneous. All sorts of nations lived together as best they could. For a time Egypt held nominal control of the country and placed governors in the principal cities. Later the Hittites ruled large portions of its territory. When Israel arrived on the scene the power of the Hittites had been broken, and there was nothing to hinder them from settling in as many of the cities of Canaan as they could

get possession of and taking their place among the heterogeneous population already there. Soon after the conquest we find that the clans of Israel possessed a bond of union which the others lacked. They were able to assimilate the mixed population and evolve an Israelite nation. This bond that united them was their religion. The call to the tribes to rally to the help of Jahweh was never unheeded. They became one people, because they belonged to one God.

The establishment of this bond of union between the tribes must be ascribed to Moses. He was the founder of Israel's religion. One account directly asserts that the name Jahweh was not known before his time (Ex. 6:2, 3). After the deliverance from Egypt Moses led the people into the mountains of the Sinaitic peninsula to the storm-clad peak where Jahweh dwelt. There he taught them of the God whom he himself had learned to know among the same rocky heights. The nature of the religious teaching of Moses must be found in those fundamental principles of Israel's religion which appear in their earliest historical records.

Moses revealed God to Israel as the *Living God*. This is what the name Jahweh signifies. Whether Moses originated the name or not matters little; he first gave it its significance. Jahweh is the god that exists, not in an absolute sense, but as one that works freely in history. The living God was Israel's God and Israel's helper. His ear was open to their cry. He went before to fight their battles. Israel's enemies were Jahweh's enemies, Israel's battles Jahweh's battles, and Israel's victories the glory of Jahweh.

Moses gave Israel a God who stood in real personal relations to the nation. When Israel ascribed their victories to Jahweh, it was no empty phrase such as was often in the mouth of an Assyrian king. The difference is in the fact that in Israel's view it was impossible for Jahweh to suffer another god to be worshipped beside him. Jahweh was a jealous God and would tolerate no divided service. Here lies a broad distinction between Israel's relation to Jahweh and that of Moab to Chemosh or Phœnicia to Baal. The relation of Israel to Jahweh was national

rather than individual till long after Moses' time. But the idea of Jahweh as Israel's helper is the germ of the Christian conception of the individual Saviour of each member of the kingdom.

Moses did not conceive of Jahweh as the God of the whole world and such teaching would have been meaningless to Israel, for they had no world-conception to underlie it. Yet the basis for absolute monotheism lies in Moses' teaching and the conception of God which he gave was abundantly able to enlarge as rapidly as world-ideas came into the consciousness of the nation.

What did Jahweh require of his people? An answer must be drawn from the Ten Commandments rather than from the ceremonial law. No part of criticism has done more to remove false conceptions of the work of Moses than the recognition that the Priests' Code does not belong to his time. Moses is the true predecessor of the prophets. The ceremonial system of Israel scarcely differed from the common Semitic type. Jeremiah understood the true nature of Moses' teaching: "I spake not to your fathers nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings, or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Harken unto my voice and I will be your God and ye shall be my people." (Jer. 7:22, 23.)

Moses did vastly more, however, than simply give the people moral precepts. We might almost say, he gave them a moral God. The difference between the moral teachings of Moses and the precepts of the Egyptian priests lies in the fact that Jahweh's demands were based on his own character. Jahweh was a holy God, therefore his people must be a holy people. Israel's ground and motive to righteousness lay in the character of their God.

In these teachings we see the germ of a real theocracy. Jahweh was the living helper and king of his people. No king could exist otherwise than as the deputy of Jahweh. When the kingdom was forced upon the nation by circumstances, the prophets looked upon the king as the vice-regent of Jahweh, the true head of the nation. Further, Moses seems to have taught

that there must be no image of Jahweh. Jahweh dwelt on the mountain peak of Sinai, but his presence among the people was represented by the ark containing the law. Shiloh the true successor of Moses' sanctuary in the wilderness contained no images. And finally Jahweh had adopted Israel. He was not their natural father. There are indeed indications that Jahweh was originally worshiped by the Kenites or some other tribe dwelling in the desert of Sinai, and in any case Israel's relation to Jahweh was based on a covenant. He secured his right over them by delivering them from Egypt. That deliverance was Israel's adoption and the blood of Jahweh's covenant rested upon the people.

3. *Sojourn at Kadesh*.—The unanimous tradition of the nation points to Kadesh as the first permanent stopping place of the tribes after leaving Egypt. The ancient site has been discovered in the desert south of Canaan. Here the pastoral habits of the people, to some extent interrupted by the sojourn in Egypt, reasserted themselves and the people lived a true nomad life.

The Jahweh sanctuary was at Kadesh and there was the spring of Moses. Around it the people roved with their flocks over the broad pasture lands south of Edom.

4. *Conquest of the East Jordan land*.—While at Kadesh the tribes attempted to invade Palestine from the south, but were unsuccessful. What caused them to finally leave Kadesh seems to have been an invasion of the country of Moab and Ammon by the Amorites under Sihon. A fragment of an old song describing this invasion and the havoc wrought upon Moab is preserved in Numbers 21:27 ff. Israel took the side of their cousins against the invaders and drove them out, but instead of returning the recovered country to Moab, they settled in it themselves, removing the Kadesh sanctuary to Shittim. We would gladly know more of the condition of Israel in these new quarters east of the Jordan. That Balak, king of Moab, resented their settlement in that district we know from the Balaam prophecies. Here arose the first inclination to agricultural life and it resulted in a division among the tribes, some refusing to give up their nomad habits and remaining behind, while the majority looked longingly across the Jordan to the fer-

tile fields of Canaan. Conflict with the Moabites, narrow quarters, and the fact that at that time Canaan lay open to invasion, probably hastened their determination to cross the Jordan.

5. *Conquest of Canaan.*—We have two accounts of the conquest. One in Joshua which represents the nation of Israel as crossing the Jordan *en masse* and capturing Jericho at Ai. Having thus secured a foothold in the center, the rest of Palestine was subdued in two campaigns. One to the south in which Joshua defeated five kings of the Amorites and followed it up with a victorious march, conquering city after city until the whole south of Palestine from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza was swept bare. In the words of the writer: "He left none remaining, but banned all that breathed." A similar campaign in the north completed the work and the land thus swept bare of its inhabitants was divided among the tribes by lot.

But even in Joshua there are passages inserted from a different narrative that lead us to think that this is too sweeping a view of the conquest, and the account in Judges 1:1 b—2:5 makes our suspicion a certainty. Here we find the tribes of Judah and Simeon setting out first and with the aid of the Kenites securing a precarious footing among the inhabitants of southern Palestine; and later the house of Joseph establishing itself around Bethel.

The conquest left four centers of Israelite population; Judah in the south near Hebron; the house of Joseph in the center, dwelling in the hill country of Ephraim; Zebulun, Asher, and other tribes north of the valley of Esdraelon, and Gad with his companions left behind in the east Jordan country. Judah was almost completely isolated and as far as we know had no intercourse with the other tribes till the time of the Philistine war. The Jahweh sanctuary remained with the house of Joseph. The ark was taken from Shittim to Gilgal, thence to Bochim and finally to Shiloh.

But it is not a matter of prime importance just when or how the conquest of Canaan was accomplished. Let the little battles with the Canaanites be fought when and where they may. The significance of the conquest for Israel lay in the total change in

the habits of life that it involved. History makes us familiar with two kinds of conquest. One when a rising nation pushes out into a barbarous country and conquers, annexes, and colonizes the district. The other when rude, vigorous tribes fall upon a highly civilized but weakened people and appropriate the civilization prepared by others. The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites was an instance of the latter. The Canaanites were their superiors in the arts. A nomad in the desert lived under circumstances vastly different from those of a husbandman or trader in a town in Canaan. The shepherd is a rover. He owns nothing but what he can pick up and carry with him. If he is attacked, his safety lies in the speed with which he can gather up his possessions and flee. Content to tend his flocks and herds, with no motives to lead him to steady occupation, he is unused to toil. But if the shepherd becomes a tiller of the soil, all this is changed. He must engage in steady work, and build a permanent home; if attacked, he cannot flee, but must defend his possessions. Hence he needs strongholds and standing guards. This was the condition that faced the Israelites in Canaan. And from whom could they learn these new arts but from the Canaanites? We have seen above how the lack of organization among the dwellers in Canaan made it possible for the Israelites to settle among them. Side by side were Israelite and Canaanite towns, and even in the same villages the two nationalities were together. From these Canaanites Israel learned the arts necessary to life amid their new surroundings.

But we must not over-estimate Canaanite civilization because of its superior knowledge of the arts of trade and agriculture, which was largely due to favorable surroundings. The Canaanites lacked central authority and a religion which would enable social and moral progress to keep pace with industrial. Now that the conditions of progress were supplied by settlement in permanent homes Israel would soon leave the Canaanites far behind. And where could a better position have been found for the home of the people of Jahweh? They faced the west. Phœnicia, the most advanced nation of the world, was at their side. Behind were the ancient civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt; in front,

the prophecies of Greece and Rome. They could take the best from the old, unbound by the shackles of inherited tradition, and feel the impulse of new times coming.

6. *Contact with the Canaanites.*—We must examine a little more closely the immediate influence of this close daily intercourse with the Canaanites. The early years in Palestine was a testing time for the nation. Would Israel be able to assimilate the new ideas borrowed from the Canaanites, or would she lose her identity as a nation? Especially were their religious principles put to the test. The simple worship of the desert was not enough to meet the requirements of the new modes of life. As in the arts and sciences Israel must borrow largely from the Canaanites. She took their sanctuaries on the high places, their harvest feasts, sacrifices, and forms of worship suited to the settled life. Would Israel be able to infuse the spirit of Jahweh into those new forms?

To realize the temptation to which the Israelites were subjected we must understand something of the Canaanite worship. The Canaanites were primarily worshipers of the baalim, the local gods that lived in every tree and spring and glen in the land. Each homestead, we might almost say, possessed a little sanctuary to the local baal of the place. The god owned the land and the one who cultivated it must render him his due. The worship was intensely social and the temptation was strong to accept an invitation from the Canaanite neighbors to join in feasts to their gods. The history of the period is but a repetition of the sad refrain: Israel "forsook Jahweh and went and served the baalim." The moral test of Jahweh's religion was fully as severe. The new political, social, and trade relations brought new temptations as well as the grosser allurements from the debasing practices connected with the worship of the Ashtaroth. We can easily believe there was much debasing of the Jahweh religion and some syncretism between Jahweh and Baal. But in the end the religion of Jahweh triumphed. The people struggled up out of their dark period and Jahweh worship superseded that of baalim. Canaanite forms were given new meaning. The new nation was socially, morally, and religiously

true to the Israelite ideals. The Book of the Covenant represents Israel's religion as it emerged from this testing time. The Canaanite elements have been assimilated and the religion is that taught by Moses simply adapted to an agricultural life in a settled community.

7. *The conquest of the Kishon Valley.*—The first great event to call forth the national spirit after the settlement in Canaan was the conflict with Sisera. The early conquests did not include the valley of Esdraelon. The Canaanite still occupied the most fertile portion of the whole land. But the conflict was only a question of time.

We have two accounts of the battle—the prose account in Judges 4, and the poetic account in Judges 5. The poem is the older and contains a clearer description of the contest. Sisera leads the Canaanite kings. The tribes muster at the head of the valley; the battle begins near Tanaach and the defeated Canaanites retreat down the valley and a flood in the Kishon helps to sweep them away. The prose account presents difficulties by the introduction of Jabin, king of Hazor, and representing the mustering of Israel as taking place at Kadesh.

The importance of the battle is however independent of details. Our interest lies in the spirit of Deborah's song, the oldest piece of Israel's literature that we possess. The battle is Jahweh's, the tribes rally to the support of Jahweh. Those who fail to take part are bitterly cursed. The song breathes the true spirit of the religion of Moses. The victory was an example of what the tribes could accomplish by united effort, and its effect was not lost.

8. *Attempt to make Gideon king.*—The next step in the growth of the kingdom was more local but perhaps no less important in its influence.

Not only to Israel but also to many another desert tribe was Palestine a land of promise. Many before Israel had invaded the land and settled in its fertile fields, and others were on their heels. Must Israel yield in turn to new invaders? The account of Gideon and the Midianites shows the condition of an agricultural people with inadequate means of defense against these

roving bands of robbers. Their incursions were accurately timed. Appearing suddenly when the grain was ripe, they plundered the fields, drove off the cattle, and left the poor husbandman to mourn the destruction of all his hopes.

As with most of these accounts we have several versions of the story. One including the major part of Judges, chs. 6–7, lays emphasis on the religious experience of Gideon in the campaign, and the other, Judges 8:4, ff., which appears to be the older, makes the original incentive for Gideon's pursuit of the Midianites a desire for blood revenge, because of the murder of his kinsman. The spirit of private war, which was characteristic of those times, breathes in this account. When the captured princes are brought before Gideon, he wishes to teach his son the sacred duty of blood revenge and calls upon the young man to "up and slay them," but the youth shrinks from the fearful duty and the father takes it upon himself.

Encouraged by their success, Gideon's fellow tribesmen urge him to be their king, but the ideals of the Mosaic theocracy are still strong in the hero. He reminds them that Jahweh is their king. Of the spoils of the Midianites Gideon builds a Jahweh sanctuary at Ophrah and worships his Lord with mighty zeal. Such men as Gideon and also Jephthah, whom we have not space to describe, were noble champions of Jahweh in their day; and an understanding of the state of society in which justice was only secured by the rudimentary methods of blood revenge and the ban, and in which even human sacrifice had its propitiatory significance, will remove all need of apologizing for their actions.

9. *The conspiracy of Abimelech.*—Abimelech was the son of Gideon by a Canaanite mother. The story of his conspiracy in Judges 9 is one of the oldest accounts in the book and gives a vivid picture of the struggles between the Israelites and the Canaanites. Abimelech represented to his mother's people at Sechem that a kingdom was to be established and the only choice lay between him and the other sons of Gideon. Naturally they fall in with his proposals and assist him with money from their sanctuary. With this help the conspirator raises a band of kindred spirits and slays all his brethren—a neces-

sary precaution in those days of blood revenge. The Shechemites, however, soon tire of Abimelech's rule, but are only rid of him after terrible tumults in which they realize the truth of Jotham's prophecy, "Let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem." This experience greatly dampened the zeal of the people for a king and we hear no more of such popular demands till the time of Samuel.

10. *The Philistine oppression.*—As we approach the time of Samuel, tradition becomes much more full and we can only briefly indicate the course of events. The nomad invasions had been too intermittent to force the tribes into permanent union. But in the Philistines the tribes met a foe of a different nature. The origin of the Philistines is obscure, but it seems probable that they were a part of those migrations from the coast of the Mediterranean that disturbed Egypt during the latter part of the XIXth dynasty. Tradition says they came from Caphtor, supposed to be Crete, and quite likely they entered Palestine later than the Israelites. While the tribes of Israel were establishing themselves among the hills and repulsing the nomad invasions from the east, the Philistines were forming a strong federation in the coast plain on the southwest. The two nations soon came into conflict and it was long doubtful which was to win final supremacy in Palestine.

At first the advantage rested with the Philistines. The stories of Samson are evidence of constant border warfare between the two peoples. And the tribes of Dan (Judges 13) and Simeon (Chron. 4:39-42) were completely crowded out of their possessions. Finally the Philistines defeated the Israelites at Aphek, captured the ark, killed the sons of Eli, and pressed on till they captured and destroyed Shiloh, securing possession of the whole central portion of Palestine. Israel was now completely in the hands of the Philistines and threatened with a bondage that recalled their sojourn in Egypt. For long years the people lay prostrate under the Philistine yoke.

11. *The revival under Samuel and the rise of the prophets.*—The Philistine oppression brought the people back to Jahweh. There was a great revival of Jahweh religion. In this religious

awakening arose the prophets, men who devoted themselves especially to the service of Jahweh. They formed a sort of sect or community, and may be compared to the Rechabites or Nazarites. We first find them going about the country in bands, (Sam. 10:5, etc.); but soon they appear in settled communities and probably were to be found in nearly all the Israelite towns. Their distinguishing feature was that they were men filled with the spirit of Jahweh. They fought the wars of Jahweh and to their zeal was largely due the victories over the Philistines and the rise of the kingdom of David. The leader of the prophets was Samuel, who had grown up at the Shiloh sanctuary and was fully in sympathy with the religion of Moses.

12. *The kingdom of Saul.*—Samuel and the prophets realized that the only hope of success against the Philistines was in a permanent government with a king at their head. The oldest account of the founding of the kingdom (1 Sam. 9, 10:1–16 and 11:) shows plainly that Samuel was the real mover in choosing a king, though undoubtedly he spoke some earnest words to the people as to the nature of the move they were taking, as is recorded in the later account.

The problem before Samuel was to find a man for king who would be able to lead the people to victory and still be thoroughly in sympathy with the prophets at the recent revival. Saul appeared to be the man. Samuel succeeded in bringing him over to the prophetic party and securing his election as king. Saul's conversion was a great gain for the prophets. The popular surprise and enthusiasm is expressed in the proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The victories that followed seemed to justify the wisdom of the choice.

13. *The break between Saul and the prophetic party.*—But Saul did not fulfil the hopes of the prophets. He led the people to victory but was not careful to obey Jahweh. The occasion of the final break between the prophets and the king was the war with the Amalekites. Their country lay south of Palestine. With the exception of the Philistines, they were Israel's worst enemies (1 Sam. 14:48). The prophets pronounced the ban against these people and urged Saul to lead them to war. The ban

was a custom somewhat similar to the taboo among the South Sea Islanders. Whatever was banned must be totally destroyed. Saul consented to the war, but after the victory broke the ban and made it a campaign for plunder. This was a heinous sin and could not fail to call down the wrath of Jahweh upon the nation. The prophets at once broke with Saul, announced to him that Jahweh had rejected him, and began to look about for a man to take his place.

14. *The choice of David.*—The break with the prophets cost Saul his kingdom. Without their support he was unable to win further victories over the Philistines. The people said Jahweh had departed from Saul. The thoughts of the prophets soon turned toward David as the suitable man to take Saul's place, and their preference soon became publicly known. Saul's last years were darkened by jealous opposition to David and his career ended in suicide after the defeat by the Philistines at Gilboah. David proved to be the prophets' ideal king. Whatever his faults, he remained true to the religion of Jahweh.

15. *The establishment of the capital at Jerusalem.*—The Philistine war had brought the tribe of Judah into prominence and the first years of David's reign were over this tribe alone. When the nation was reunited, the question of the capital arose. Hebron was too far south and Shiloh in the north lay in ruins. David chose Jerusalem, a strong fortress situated near the boundary line between the two divisions of the people. This he made the capital of the united people. It was equally necessary, but more difficult to make it the religious center of the nation. A sanctuary in those days depended on its associations for its sanctity. The most sacred associations of the prophets were connected with the ruined Shiloh, and nothing was more natural than that David should seek to restore, as far as possible the Shiloh sanctuary at Jerusalem. This he succeeded in doing, and with the coming of Shiloh to Judah a new period for Israel set in. The formative time was over. Israel had become a nation. Their hold on Palestine was assured. David thoroughly subdued the Philistines and defeated his enemies on all sides.

The final establishment of the monarchy was even more significant for the nation's progress than the change from a pastoral to an agricultural life, attendant on their settlement in Canaan. We see the nation growing into settled habits and forms of justice. Industries of all kinds will feel a new impulse. The nation is ready to burst forth into a bloom period of prosperity under Solomon.